



• Press Release

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MEMORIAL ART GALLERY ACQUIRES RENAISSANCE SUIT OF ARMOR



ROCHESTER, NY — Beginning January 17, visitors to the Memorial Art Gallery can see a major new addition to the permanent collection—a beautifully decorated suit of etched armor made in northern Germany in the 16th century.

“There are few museum objects that inspire such a sense of wonder or stimulate the imagination more than armor, with its evocations of knighthood and chivalry,” says director Grant Holcomb. “I anticipate that this magnificent addition to the Gallery's permanent collection will attract visitors of all ages and enable us to explore the art, life and music of the European Renaissance.”

The armor is a partial set consisting of interchangeable, etched steel pieces—helmet, breastplate and *tassets* (thigh protectors), backplate, *gorget* (collar) and shoulder plates. The breastplate is dated 1562—a rarity among Brunswick armor—and the other pieces date from the same period. All were made by the same workshop for the Dukes of Brunswick (Braunschweig), and all would have been worn by the Dukes' knights and soldiers as they battled neighboring states and honed their skills in tournaments and jousts.

In addition to being historically important, the pieces are significant artworks that illustrate Old Testament stories, classical myths, and Renaissance birds, beasts and grotesques. On the breastplate, a medallion illustrating the Old Testament story of Daniel in the Lion's Den is inscribed in German:

MY LIFE AND DESTINY REST IN GOD'S HANDS. OH MY LORD GOD.
I PRAY THAT YOU PROTECT MY SOUL, LIFE AND HONOR. 1562.

The armor will play a critical role in the museum's educational mission, says director of education Susan Daiss. “A suit of armor is an iconic object, with the potential to immediately conjure images that are alluring to audiences of all ages, particularly schoolchildren.”

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ABOVE: Unknown (Brunswick Armory), *Partial Armor Made for the Dukes of Brunswick* (early 1560s; breastplate dated 1562). Etched steel and leather. Maurice R. and Maxine B. Forman Fund, the Clara and Edwin Strassenburgh Fund, the Marie Adelaide Devine Fund, and the June Alexander Memorial Fund.

The Gallery has been looking for a high quality suit of armor for at least a decade, says Nancy Norwood, curator of European art. What made this one even more attractive was its impeccable history and the exceptional beauty of its imagery. In the words of British expert Ian Eaves, the armor “represents the Brunswick school of armorers at its apogee.”

Funds for the purchase came from four Memorial Art Gallery endowments—the Maurice R. and Maxine B. Forman Fund, the Clara and Edwin Strassenburgh Fund, the Marie Adelaide Devine Fund, and the June Alexander Memorial Fund.

About the Brunswick Armors

The Gallery’s armor is from a distinctive group identified in ducal inventories in 1667 and 1732. The bulk of this arsenal was sold off in the 19th century, when the Dukes of Brunswick kept only the most attractive pieces to furnish their castle, Schloss Blankenburg in the Hartz region of central Germany. In 1942, the remains of the armory were transferred to Schloss Marienburg, near Hanover, to avoid capture by invading Soviet troops. The Royal House of Hanover decided to sell off the bulk of the collection a few years ago. The Gallery's armor was acquired in 2006 from an arms and armor dealer; it is in excellent condition following its recent restoration by a conservator specializing in armor.

Other institutions with full or partial sets of Brunswick armor include Windsor Castle, the Royal Armouries in Leeds, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Hours and admission

The Memorial Art Gallery is open Wednesday–Sunday 11 am to 5 pm and Thursday until 9 pm; closed Mondays, Tuesdays and major holidays.

Admission is \$7; college students with ID and senior citizens, \$5; children 6–18, \$3; free to MAG members, UR students and children 5 and under. Reduced admission Thursdays 5–9 pm, \$2.

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